

Buffalo Grove, IL - U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk joined Metra's Executive Director Phil Pagano to announce new express trains for the North Central Line to shorten the commute and improve flexibility for thousands of people living in Northern Illinois.

Kirk joined State Representative Sid Mathias, Buffalo Grove Mayor Elliot Hartstein, Trustee Jeff Berman and Jim Kvedaras, Manager Public and Government Affairs, of the Canadian National (CN) railway to announce the start of the expanded service. Since elected, Kirk helped secure \$135 million in federal funds to complete the line's second track, allowing Metra to double the number of trains on the first new commuter rail line built in America since the 1950s.

The North Central Line now serves commuters in Prospect Heights, Wheeling, Buffalo Grove, Vernon Hills, Mundelein and Libertyville.

After five years of work, Metra completed double tracking last year. In January, Metra increased the number of commuter trains on the line from 10 to 20.

While the new trains allowed commuters the flexibility to leave earlier and work later, the schedule did not include express trains or shorter commuting times.

Kirk won the commitment of Metra and CN to make changes after a 90-day formal study.

Kirk held a May public hearing to hear from commuters before convening Metra and CN officials in July to propose new express trains and shorter commuting times on the new rail line.

"Working with Metra, CN and local officials, we are providing families in Northern Illinois with express trains, shorter commutes and a more flexible schedule," Kirk said. "The improved schedule adds two express/skip stop service trains during both the morning and evening rush hours. Bottom line – the new service will give many parents more time to be with their kids."

On September 11, Metra will add two downtown-bound express trains in the morning and two return express trains in the evening. Under the old schedule, a commute from Buffalo Grove to Union Station took 62 minutes. Under the new schedule, the commute will take just 53 minutes – even faster than the sister North Line service over a similar distance to Lake Forest.

“Our express service will allow a commuter to save over 80 hours each year in commuting time.

The service will also help people connect to O’Hare while meeting our obligations under the Clean Air Act.”

The expanded service also includes new trains for reverse commuters coming from the city in the morning and returning in the evening. By giving reverse commuters the option of using Metra, the expanded service will help reduce the gridlock on the Kennedy, Edens and Northwest Tollway.

Congressman Kirk applauded the work of Jeff Berman, a Buffalo Grove Village Trustee, for his work on the North Central Line’s schedule.

“Over 200,000 residents of the 10th District could benefit from the North-Central’s expanded service with more flexible commutes and higher home values.

Federal funding for the North Central Line is one of my proudest achievements in Congress and will make a real difference in improving the quality of life for northern Illinois families.”